



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
Milwaukee County
CHRIS ABELE • COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele Convenes Community Leaders on Office on African American Affairs

Ralph Hollmon to Spearhead Group's Discussions on OAAA Hiring and Community Engagement

MILWAUKEE – Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele will ask community leaders for input on the efforts of the County's Office on African American Affairs. Ralph Hollmon will spearhead the group.

Milwaukee County's new Office on African American Affairs has the ambitious mission of recognizing and addressing the County's racial inequities for the benefit of all of its citizenry and for the region to achieve its full potential. The City of Milwaukee has also taken on this mission by establishing its own office, with which the County looks forward to partnering.

For this key Office to stay at the forefront of the conversation, and to ensure that the community remains aware of the Office's mission and objectives, County Executive Abele is also launching a strategic paid advertising campaign highlighting the Office in traditional print media, a targeted social media campaign, and earned media opportunities on television, radio, and in print. The campaign will have a strong focus on talent acquisition.

The county executive will be meeting with key social justice stakeholders, talking with neighborhood associations and community organizers, and soliciting input on social media.

Most critically, we are actively recruiting a leader to serve as OAAA director who will provide strategic leadership for all aspects of the Office. We are looking for disciplined, accountable, performance-minded individuals who have a proven track record of getting things done. The Director will also lead the implementation of coordinated plans in areas that include workforce

development, criminal justice reform, and other strategic areas.

The group led by Mr. Hollmon will help engage the community to hear what they want to see from this Office and what kind of leader they believe can get it done. The OAAA director must understand Milwaukee and its unique history, assets, and challenges. They must also be able to unify the community, navigate internal and external politics, manage complex projects, and maintain a steadfast focus on producing quality outcomes. The job posting is available [here](#).

“Now more than ever, this Office and its mission are my highest priority,” County Executive Chris Abele said. “The challenges facing Milwaukee County require more than talk, they require action. We’ve been talking about housing segregation for 50 years in Milwaukee – people need to know what we are going to do about it. This Office will make a meaningful investment in sustainable programs and infrastructure that can begin to address these kinds of systemic issues, and we will empower people to live better lives while continuing to build the foundation for a stronger, healthier community. So important is this mission that Ralph Hollmon has graciously decided to take some time off from his well-earned retirement to help lead our efforts to find the right director. I’m incredibly grateful for the support of leaders like Mr. Hollmon, and look forward to carrying out the mission of the Office on African American Affairs.”

“I’ve worked with, for, and on behalf of Milwaukee County residents for many years. Under County Executive Abele’s leadership, the County is now in a unique position to move the needle on eliminating racial inequities through Office on African American Affairs programs like UpLift Milwaukee and Opportunity Knocks. A strong director who will devote their full attention every day to achieving the Office’s mission is critical to success in these endeavors. I’m happy to take on a key organizing role among the leadership group that will provide input on possible OAAA director candidates,” said Ralph Hollmon.

More About the Office on American Affairs

In just a few months, and without a dedicated staff in place, the Office has had great success with two initiatives, the Opportunity Knocks program and UpLift MKE.

“Building a Foundation,” an Annual Report detailing the Office’s first year, is available [here](#).

Opportunity Knocks, which launched in fall of 2016, is a novel housing model that utilizes home equity created through home renovation to fund reentry services and first-time home ownership. Opportunity Knocks takes tax-foreclosed homes in Milwaukee County suburban municipalities, renovates the homes while providing job training to nonviolent House of Correction (HOC) offenders, provides reentry services to the offenders after the renovation, and sells the house to a first-time homeowner through the County’s new Section 8 Homeownership Program paired with HOME funds for down payment assistance.

This program will help expand the House of Correction’s existing reentry services and job training

and placement capability, allowing us to empower more people to live a better life.

The County has helped even more people to date with UpLift MKE, a unique job training and placement program that began one year ago. Working with community partners like the Milwaukee Bucks, Milwaukee County has already placed more than 100 individuals in jobs averaging more than \$15 per hour through UpLift MKE. These job training and placement efforts are targeted directly to workers, particularly those in and near the Sherman Park area, who most need support to successfully climb the ladder of opportunity.

This program has been so successful that County Executive Abele expanded it less than a year in. His 2017 budget added an extra \$500,000 in funding for UpLift MKE and \$165,000 for the Boys and Girls Club of Milwaukee to add a Youth Career Development project manager to serve teenagers in Sherman Park and other areas. In 2015, more than 300 teenagers found employment through the efforts of the Boys and Girls Club, and this funding will expand their efforts.

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